EIA notification, 1994 & Forest (Conservation) Act 1980 repectively. A decision is taken within 90 days of receipt of complete information.

UNFPA report on destruction of forests

645. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether Government are aware of the reports of United National Population Fund (UNFPA) regarding destruction of forests;

(b) whether it is a fact that India is a loser of 12.5 per cent of forests; and

(c) what remedial action has been taken or is proposed by Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Forest Survey of India assesses forest cover of the country biennially since 1987 using satellite data. So far six assessments have been published and Report of Seventh Assessment is ready for publication. As per the six assessments, forest cover of the country has decreased from 64.20 million hectares to 63.33 million hectares in the period 1981—1983 to 1993—1995, however, seventh assessment of the period 1995—97 shows marginal increase to 63.72 million hectares.

(c) Follwing remedial actions have been taken to check destruction of forests:

(i) Afforestation programmes are undertaken by State/UT Governments from their own resources as well as with financial assistance from Government of India.

(ii) Externally aided projects are being implemented for development and preservation of forests.

(iii) Guidelines to all State/UT Governments to involve village communities in protection and regeneration of degraded forests.

(iv) Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 has been enacted to regulate the diversion of forest lands.

(v) A net work of protected areas has been established.

(vi) Recently, Ministry has prepared a National Forests Action Plan to enhance the contribution of forestry and tree resources for ecological stability and people centered development through improvement in investment for conservation and development of forest resources.

Ecological degradation in coastal areas of Orissa

646. SHRI MAN MOHAN SAMAL: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether it is a fact that illegal prawn culture on the coastal areas of Orissa has adversely affected the ecological balance of the area; and

(b) Whether Government have made any study on the aforesaid ecological degradation in those areas?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) In compliance with the directions of the Supreme Court, National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Nagpur, conducted an investigation regarding the adverse impacts of aquaculture on the coastal areas of various States, including Orissa.

Encroachment of forest areas in Orissa

647. SHRI MAN MOHAN SAMAL: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether it is a fact that large areas of protected land meant for village forest have been illegally encroached by unscrupulous people in the coastal districts of Balasore, Bhadror, Vendrapara, Puri and Jagatsingpur in Orissa;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and